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Besides working in Assistive Technology, I am a person who uses a cochlear implant. It is difficult for me to communicate effectively with people with speech disabilities, as I have a hearing disability. In my work, I frequently need to have phone conversations with people who have speech disabilities, and using STS relay is the best method for doing so. I need for STS to be as easy and effective as possible for both me and my consumers in order for me to provide quality and meaningful service.

-CAs need to stay on the line for a minimum of 20 mins. All Relay calls, whether STS, TTY, or VCO, take more time than a typical phone conversation. People with speech disabilities may need more time to establish effective communication with the CA in the first place. It's not fair to expect people with speech disabilities to be rushed because they need more time to communicate.

-Time should be counted only AFTER effective communication has been established.

-People with speech disabilities should have the option to mute voice. In other words, VCO should be optional. People with speech disabilities may be hesitant to use STS because they are worried about how the other party will react to a person with speech disabilities. They may be embarrassed or worried that their voicing methods will be distracting to the other party. They may be concerned about discrimination. Any of these things might cause a person with a speech disability to simply not place calls, which leads to isolation.

-CAs need to explain confidentiality to each user at least once.

-STS access should be as simple as TTY Relay. There is no reason that STS users should have to dial a 10-digit number when a 3-digit number will suffice. 711 accesses other relay services easily; why not STS? STS users frequently have other concurrent disabilities, such as cognitive or motor disabilities, which makes a 10-digit number even more burdensome. Furthermore, STS users should be made aware that their numbers can be branded for STS. A profile for willing STS users would make communication faster and easier.

-At least 60 seconds should be allowed before CAs disconnect due to silence on the line. STS users may need extra time to respond appropriately to the other parties on the line, again due to the likelihood of STS users having concurrent disabilities that would slow response time.

-Abuse of STS by people without speech disabilities should be stopped. It interferes with effective use of STS by the people who need it.

-STS reimbursement rates need to be increased to ensure proper outreach.

-Multiple contacts with STS consumers should be funded to ensure proper training for potential STS users. Further funding for STS services will increase STS usage, as well as consumer

satisfaction and success. Setting up an advisory council would ensure that users are identified, represented, and trained.

-IP-STS rates should be greater than the standard per-minute rate for STS. The rate should be great enough to provide adequate incentive to providers to seek out IP-STS users and train them.

-STS services should be administered nationwide. A single provider should be appointed, unless there is sufficient market for multiple providers to compete within the market. There are probably not enough users within certain states for those states to provide adequate services to those users without laying out a significant (and undermining) cost.

-CAs must be paid competitive wages; so much so that a career as a CA should be lucrative and rewarding, to incite CAs to continue work in STS. CAs should receive regular training from qualified SLPs, and their work should reflect a high level of quality to match the quality service of SLPs.